

Special Meeting of Wednesday, March 7, 2012 (Commission Interviews)
One Twin Pines Lane, Third Floor Conference Room

CALL TO ORDER 7:00 P.M.

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Braunstein, Feierbach, Warden, Wozniak

COUNCILMEMBERS ABSENT: Lieberman

Staff Present: City Clerk Cook

Pantea Zakeri (Parks and Recreation Youth Incumbent) stated that she has enjoyed the experience of being a member of the Commission and that it was different from her expectations. She noted that she felt intimidated and nervous at first but was welcomed by the adults, and Parks and Recreation Director Gervais has been supportive. She described the learning experience and commented that she was surprised at how much work goes into planning a park. She expressed her appreciation to the City Council for giving youth the opportunity to have a voice. She stated that her peers are excited about Davey Glen Park, and described her experience with providing input on this project. She stated that she feels valued and is often asked for input. She also stated that she understands and appreciates the perspective of neighbors who do not support the park. When asked about increasing the minimum age for youth members on the Commission, she noted that it would be helpful to have a middle-school student from the public school system, for perspective. She stated that there is a difference between what high school students want than from what middle school students want.

Kristin Mercer (Planning Incumbent) expressed her desire to complete the downtown zoning. She stated that she is detail oriented and re-reads the various plans over and over. She noted that she has no issue with stating when she disagrees with staff. She commented that there is not a right or wrong answer, but that different people provide different perspectives. She explained that the findings to be made are interpretive, and that everyone finds different findings more important than others. She responded that Commissioners cannot look at facts in a vacuum, since there are guiding principles on which to make decisions, and the Commission has a duty to steer the City in the direction of the various Plans. She stated that she would prefer that staff not provide a recommendation on any project, as it can be misleading to the applicant, and that it is not the staff's job to make a final ruling. She commented that she often ignores the staff recommendation, as some staff reports stretch the findings. She recognizes that staff vets the projects prior to presenting it to the Commission. She expressed frustration that the Planning Commission is only called upon when a rubber stamp is needed, and expressed her desire that it be more proactive in the planning process. She described issues with the General Plan update process, and wishes that the Commission could have been more involved in the writing of the introduction. She recommended using a consultant to vet such documents after they are written. She noted that the sign ordinance was primarily written in-house, and that a consultant was used to review the final draft.

Richard Sullivan (Parks and Recreation) expressed his desire to help by bringing shared values to the process. He stated that he likes the balance between business, residential and open space in Belmont, and expressed his appreciation for the attention to open space. He clarified that he has not attended Commission meetings recently but has attended in the past, and has

reviewed recent meeting minutes. He noted that he was involved in the early days of planning Semeria Park, and appreciates the complexity of the project. He has toured the Davey Glen Park site and noted it has much potential. He stated that he has held management jobs in Silicon Valley and has learned to establish a balance of opinions. He expressed the need to establish consensus and then move on so things can get done. He noted that it is sometimes difficult to get unanimity, that sometimes there are entrenched opinions, and there are times when the majority has to rule. In response to questions regarding the future of the Barrett site, he stated that he has no specific opinions, but noted that it is good space and could be transformed into something better. If appointed he would want to understand more about existing projects such as Davey Glen. He noted that affordability of any project is important. He commended the volunteer efforts for the maintenance of open space.

Rick Frautschi (Planning) explained that issues with taking care of his family have abated and he needs to travel less and would have the time to serve once again. He stated that he misses interacting with the Planning Commission, and that watching on TV is not enough when you want to be involved. He is interested in being involved with current issues such as downtown development and the General Plan update. He explained that during the past year he has had time to walk the neighborhoods and speak with neighbors to get their perspective and opinions about what is going on in Belmont. He commented that the City is doing a good job in educating the residents about a variety of issues and that there is always room for improvements. He suggested that changes to the Code could help applicants with projects. In response to questions regarding the San Juan Canyon, he stated that the City should not be promoting development in that area as it is geologically unstable. He noted that there are options for property owners with vacant lots without taking their property. He does not want to force building on unbuildable lots. He stated that development needs to be sensitive to the environment and to existing neighbors. He explained that he has no issue with Planning Commission decisions that are appealed. He stated that once the Commission takes an action, it can move on to the next matter. When questioned regarding staff recommendations, he stated that staff's job is to analyze the data and it is the Commission's job to make a decision based on that analysis. He commented that including a recommendation can provide a preconceived bias for some Commissioners.

Kenn Parsons, Planning Commissioner, commented regarding staff making recommendations on projects before the Commission.

Tracy Patel (Finance) stated that she has lived in Belmont for 18 months. She explained that she has always wanted to be involved in any community, and now that she has set roots and begun her family, this is an opportunity to do so. She stated that the Finance Commission best suits her skills. She explained that she is an attorney working in the area of general corporate finance. She provided details regarding her professional background. She noted that she is familiar with a variety of financial concepts but brings a background as an attorney. She works in a collaborative environment of advisors on how to structure financing. She explained that she has not attended Commission meetings but reviewed recent meeting minutes, and added that it is difficult to get a good sense of things just by reading minutes. In response to inquiries regarding time commitments, she explained that she would not have applied if she did not have the time to commit. Discussion ensued regarding the budget review process. Ms. Patel acknowledged that

salaries and benefits are a critical component of the City's budget. She stated that she would try to understand the budget and would ask questions for clarification.

RECESS **8:25 P.M.**
RECONVENE: **8:30 P.M.**

Alex Bartee (Parks and Recreation Youth Incumbent) stated that he enjoys contributing, and that the most important accomplishment was on the Davey Glen Park subcommittee. He noted that he is the only youth member to ever serve on a subcommittee, and that he contributed the idea for Phase D of the proposed plans. He acknowledged that the budget for this park is a challenge, and that grants and other sources of monies are being sought. He explained that even though he is no longer at Carlmont High School, he still has a connection with the students there. He provided feedback from teens about the need for improvements at Waterdog Lake, such as the installation of benches and the repair of the dock. He noted that people who do not support Davey Glen Park have the same opinions about other similar parks, such as College View Park, and that concerns they raised, such as parking, never arose. He commented that continuity and experience is important for the Commission and he requested to be appointed for another year.

Austin Fisher (Parks and Recreation Youth) stated that he has always wanted to get involved and have a voice. He explained that he has family members who are elected officials. He has knowledge of the local trails, as he is involved in mountain biking, and he also plays sports. He noted that he is good at working with others and can compromise. He stated that he attended a recent Parks and Recreation Commission meeting where improvements to Barrett were discussed. He stated he would like to create more activities for teens, such as on line computer classes and mountain bike clinics. When questioned about setting aside time for meetings, he explained that he would plan ahead if he had a project due at school. He explained that he would reach out and ask friends for their input on issues.

ADJOURNMENT at this time, being 8:50 P.M.

Terri Cook
City Clerk

Meeting Tape Recorded but not Videotaped
Audio Recording 812